

THE SNOW,
IT CALLS HER TO HIM

Tonight At Noon

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Summary: He doesn't know why, but each time it snows, she is there knocking at his window, looking for refuge from the cold.

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It's happened twice before, but this time he thinks she's truly gone crazy. The snow is coming down in thick clumps, so fast it looks as though there is a sheet of endless white falling from the sky. She's covered in the stuff, half-frozen in her red coat and pink gloves. Her cheeks are rosy and chapped, teeth chattering. Looking over his window sill, he sees she's wearing only slippers.

Jonathan wastes no time in offering a hand and helping her into his room. She clambers inside, stuttering her thanks.

"Why are you here?"

He's never before thought to ask this question. The first time she appeared at his window in the middle of the night, hair dotted white with sprinkles of the season's first snow, it had been only four days after their encounter with the monster. He hadn't questioned her choice to come to him and not Steve. He knew what she had been through in a different way than Steve. He'd been through it too, to the same degree.

That night, he wrapped her in a blanket and let her take the bed. It wasn't like the first time they shared a room for the night. There was no invitation from her to join her, and he was glad of it. She was still there when he awoke in the morning, chest rising and falling with slow breaths, but when he returned to the room after his shower, she had disappeared, leaving his window open.

The second time was stranger. It was earlier in the evening. Snowing again, the second fall of the winter. Lighter this time than before, but the air was colder. Their breaths met like clouds of whispering smoke as they stared at each other, her blue eyes shining like moonlit sapphires, her eyelashes frozen together from what looked like tears. Again, he gave her the bed. As he was preparing his own sleeping place on the floor at the foot of his bed, he thought he heard her say his name, but when he stood over her, she had closed her eyes and

drifted to sleep. When he came to, he woke with snowflakes glittering on his skin from the open window.

Tonight, it's snowing harder than it has in Hawkins since the Great Blizzard hit Indiana in '78. Nancy isn't just dusted with snow, she's covered. Shaking and blue. Jonathan goes to his bed and grabs the softest blanket he can, coiling it around her body as he repeats his question.

"Why are you here?" He begins moving his hands up and down her arms to warm her up. She's crazy, coming here in the middle of the night. "Nancy," he says, and she looks up at him, scared. "What's wrong?"

"I"— she cuts herself off, shaking her head. "I don't know. I can't . . . I can't figure it out."

Jonathan moves them to his bed where they sit side by side, his left arm still holding her to him, rubbing up and down still. "Can't figure what out?" he asks, trying to keep his voice soft.

"The snow," she whispers, as though it's a foul word. "You weren't there in that place with the monster. It was so *cold*. And there was snow everywhere, like the sky was peeling. Each time it snows here, in Hawkins, it's like I'm being transported there, and all these memories of the horrible things that happened come rushing back."

She clamps her eyes shut and buries her head against Jonathan's chest. Caught off guard, he brings his right arm up to hug her, squeezing tight. Her body shakes with muffled sobs. Where her mouth is pressing against his Joy Division t-shirt, he feels her breath warming his skin.

"I'm sorry," she sniffs. Nancy lifts her head and looks up at him, face swollen with sadness and worry. "I know I shouldn't have come."

Jonathan quickly jumps in. "No, no, don't . . . don't say that. I'm glad you came," he admits, staring briefly at his record player. "Are you still cold?"

Nodding her head, Nancy bites her quivering lip. Jonathan lets go of

her altogether and runs about his room, sniffing the clothes he finds in search of a clean one.

"What are you doing?" she inquires from the bed.

"You, uh, you'll need to change out of those wet clothes," he tells her, finally finding a long-sleeved t-shirt that smells relatively fresh. He throws it on the bed beside Nancy and approaches her on his knees. Taking one of her feet and then the other, he slowly removes her snow-soaked slippers, revealing her red toes. He touches the tips of his heated fingers to the pads of her toes. A gentle shock radiates through him at the contact, but he tells himself its from nothing more than the cold. "I'll find you some socks, too."

And he does, brand new dark blue ones straight from the packet. They're five sizes too big for her tiny feet, but she takes them anyway and puts them on in silence.

"The bathroom is just down the hall," he notes, nodding at his door. She only blinks at him, like she's confused as to why he's telling her where the bathroom is located. He explains, "So you can change."

Nancy shakes her head—*no*. "I can change here. Just, look the other way."

Jonathan does as he's told, breath lodged in his throat. He hears the ruffling of clothes being removed behind him, but he dares not imagine the process. Nancy may have come to him, but she is still with Steve, and after the way he came to their aid when the monster came into his house, Jonathan finds it difficult to think low of his classmate, no matter how hard he still tries.

"Okay," Nancy breathes, and Jonathan almost flinches, "you can turn around."

He does so, slowly. Nancy is facing him, his shirt hanging loosely off of her body. Its hem reaches her knees, its sleeves run past her fingertips.

She is beautiful.

Jonathan clears his throat to distract himself. "Is it warm enough?"

She nods. They have never talked so much during her late night visits to his bedroom, but she has never come in half-frozen to death.

"Good," he says. "Good."

Jonathan turns towards his closet and starts pulling out blankets for his makeshift bed on the floor. He stands to snatch a spare pillow, but Nancy grabs his wrist, stopping him from taking one from the bed.

"Don't," she begs. "Please."

Jonathan bobs his head carefully. Nancy's eyes are wide, like they were when he pulled her from the Upside Down. He won't question her request. They climb onto the bed at the same time, him nearest the door, her facing the window. They lie together for what feels like hours. Neither of them speak. Jonathan isn't tired anymore, and judging by Nancy's quick breaths, she isn't either.

Turning over, Jonathan watches Nancy's back. Her ribs expand and contract. Unable to stop himself, he reaches out and runs his index and middle fingers down her spine. She remains still, but her breathing slows.

"I'm sorry for coming," she says again. "It was stupid of me, I know."

"Nancy, you don't have to apologise," he insists.

"Thank you, Jonathan, for saying that, but I do. It's the middle of the night in the middle of winter, it's snowing . . . I should've stayed home."

"Then why didn't you?" He isn't being cruel or condescending, he just wants to know what pulled her out of her warm bed at two-thirty in the morning, and why it dragged her to his house.

Nancy's shoulders move. Jonathan doesn't stop dragging his fingers against her back.

"Because I couldn't." Suddenly, she's facing him, her face so near his he can smell the residual of the toothpaste she uses. "Steve doesn't understand, but you do. He says I need to forget about what happened and move on, but every time I close my eyes, I can see that

thing. It scares me, Jonathan. The snow makes it worse. I'd rather get frostbite than be forced to relive that week, and I'd rather be with you than anywhere else."

He doesn't think she means that. She would probably be happier with Steve on his bed, but he's a tough boy too scared of his own fear to comfort his girlfriend. They're the worst. He's the worst.

Jonathan could laugh; he's found his hatred for Steve again. But he doesn't, because Nancy is crying again, wetting his bedsheets with her tears. Reaching out, Jonathan smooths his thumb, calloused and rough, down her soft cheek.

"You don't have to worry," he says. "It's not coming back."

Nancy snuffles and gives him a small, nearly undetectable smile that draws his eyes to her mouth. "Thank you, Jonathan."

"Of course," he says hoarsely. "Of course."

She continues crying, and Jonathan continues wiping her tears away until she's too worn out to continue and her eyes fall closed.

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The sunlight wakes him hours later. He had forgotten to shut his blind after letting Nancy inside. Jonathan opens his eyes despite their dryness, relief flooding him when he sees Nancy has yet to sneak away. He carefully comes out from beneath the covers, watching Nancy for any signs of movement, and goes to check the damage from the snowstorm.

It isn't terrible—maybe twelve inches—but he can't imagine Nancy walking home dressed solely in the clothes she came here in.

"How bad is it?"

Nancy's voice hits his ears from behind, startling him. Jonathan jumps, whipping around fast. Her hair is out of place, though he assumes his is too, and she has an imprint on her cheek from the ring she wears on her index finger.

Beautiful.

"Not as bad as it could be," he says. "I'll give you some stuff to walk home in."

"Like what?"

Jonathan moves around her to his closet and pulls out his snow gear. Boots and a snowsuit.

"They'll swallow me whole," Nancy protests, in much brighter spirits than when she arrived outside his window four hours ago.

It's true what they say, then. It gets the worst at night.

Jonathan is glad for the change in her mood and manages a smile. "Yeah, and so will the snow."

Grabbing the items out of Jonathan's hands, Nancy laughs. "Bathroom's down the hall, yes?" She takes her dried clothes off of his record player.

"Uh, yeah. On the left."

Nancy nods and leaves the room. Jonathan waits on his bed, standing when he hears her footsteps retreating from the bathroom.

"Well, how do I look?" she asks playfully from the doorway.

Approaching her, Jonathan adjusts the straps on the suit until they hug her shoulders. "Protected," he says.

They don't hug again—those types of things are reserved for the dark hours. Jonathan opens his window and helps her climb out.

"Jonathan"—

—"It's fine, Nancy. Go home before your mom finds out you're not there."

"Okay," she says, face inches from his. She's still smiling, but it's smaller now. Trembling. "Until the next snow."

Jonathan watches her leave. He watches her feet leave size ten-and-a-half footprints in the fresh snow. Watches the sun rise against her back, setting her dark hair on fire. He only turns away when she's completely out of sight. He shuts the window and goes out to make the family breakfast, hoping the next scheduled snow never makes it to Hawkins, Indiana.